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JEHUDA BONSENYOR AND HIS COLLECTION OF APHORISMS.

MY friend, A. Helfferich, who died recently, found, about forty years ago, in a Catalonian MS. in the National Library at Madrid, the *Dichos y Sentencias*, collected, by order of the king, by *Jafuda judio de Barcelona* from the writings of Arabian philosophers. He published some of these aphorisms in his work, entitled: *Raymund Lull und die Anfänge der Catalonischen Literatur*¹. Several guesses were made as to the identity of this Jafuda. Some thought, with Helfferich, of the imitator of the Arabian manner, the poet Jehuda ben Solomon Al-Charisi, who flourished in the first half of the thirteenth century, and who had translated *Sentences of Philosophers* from the Arabic into the Hebrew². Yet two years ago some considered the physician Jehuda b. Isaac b. Sabbatai of Barcelona to have been the same Jafuda, who compiled these aphorisms³. José Amador de los Rios, in his *Historia critica de la Litteratura española*, a much more thorough and better book than his *Historia de los Judios de España y Portugal*, was, as far as we know, the first to call Jafuda by his full name Jehuda ben Astruch. But who was Jehuda ben Astruch or Astruc? The greatest authority on Jewish literature in the present day confesses candidly "not to have met with, not to have come across, a Jehuda ben Astruc of Barcelona in Jewish documents⁴."

¹ Berlin, 1858.

² See Kayserling, *Sephardim*, p. 329.

³ Neuzeit, 1893, p. 140.

⁴ M. Steinschneider, *Hebr. Bibliographie*, XII, p. 60.

Nor was anything known of him in Spanish literature until quite recently. We owe it to the pains taken by D. Gabriel Llabrés y Quintana, the vice-president of the "Luliana" in Palma, on the island of Malorca, who first edited the whole of Jehuda's aphorisms and sentences in the Catalanian language¹, that Jehuda ben Astruc is no longer an unknown person.

He was the son of Astrug Bonsenyor of Barcelona, who is called Struch or Nastruch juen in the *Chronic. del Rey En Jaeme*, and to whom I directed attention in 1861². Like D. Solomon of Saragossa, and his brother Bahie, he was secretary of the King D. Jaime I of Aragon, to whom he was of considerable service as interpreter during his campaigns. We believe him to have already been in the service of the king in 1239. For, when after the conquest of Valencia, the Archbishop of Toledo, on the strength of an ancient right, claimed ecclesiastical authority over that town, in evidence of his right, he cited, among other Arabic books, also the work of Abubekr Mahomat Rasis, who had written the History of Moorish Spain by order of Miramamolin Dalharab. A Moor and a Jew were commissioned to study the Arabic works³. This Jew was probably no other than Astrug Bonsenyor of Barcelona. The king held Astrug in special favour⁴. The embassy sent by D. Jaime, at the siege of Murcia, to the besieged, consisted of several knights and Nastruch juen.

Astrug Bonsenyor died before 1280. His son Jehuda occupied the same office of interpreter with the kings Alfonso II and Jaime II as his father had filled with Jaime I, and, like the latter, was in favour with his royal

¹ Palma de Mallorea, J. Colomar y Salas, 1889.

² *Geschichte der Juden in Spanien*, I, 161.

³ Florez, *España Sagrada* (Madrid, 1756), IV, 122 sq. . . "fecimus legi per unum Judaeum et alium Saracenum, et ipsi legentes in dictis libris, scil. in libro Rasis . . ."

⁴ See also the documents in Jacobs, *Sources of Spanish-Jewish History*, nos. 159 and 369, where, instead of ben Bonseignor, Astrugo den Bonsenyor is to be read.

masters. In the same year in which Jehuda accompanied King Alfonso in his campaign to Minorca (1287) he received the exceptional permission, previously granted to his father, to construct doors and windows at a greater height than that of the wall, in his house situated in the Calle or Ghetto, adjoining the city wall, near the Plaça del Rey and the convent of S. Domingo¹.

Jaime II granted him exclusively the right of writing documents in the Arab language for merchants who came to Barcelona and only knew Arabic, and ordained that all Arabic documents composed, written, or legalized by Jehuda, in Barcelona and its dependent territories, should have full legal force².

In the year 1305 he received from the king a safe-conduct, first for a term of four months, and afterwards for another year. Of the aim and object of that journey nothing further is known. Did he undertake it in the interest of Jewish science, which was proscribed at that time? He undertook it at the request of some friends, who had also obtained the safe-conduct for him, just at the time when the struggle was at its fiercest³. It is possible that there was some connexion between his journey and the exemption from all taxes and communal burdens to which the Aljama, or Jewish congregation, of Barcelona was subjected, which was granted him as a token of royal grace and favour through the special intercession of the king's private physician Johann Amell. Neither himself nor his children should be molested on account of duties to be paid or in arrear, none of his

¹ Document of March 6, 1287, and April 4, 1334, *Arch. de la Corona de Aragon*, Reg. 486, fol. 64, in Llabrés, l. c., 130 sqq.

² Doc. of December, 1294, *Arch. de la Corona de Aragon*, Reg. 194, fol. 108 sq., in Llabrés, l. c., 123 sqq.

³ Docs. of August 14 and December 11, 1305, *Arch. de la Corona de Aragon*, Reg. 203, ff. 44 and 83, in Llabrés, l. c., 125 sq. In both documents it is said: "Noueritis nos ad maximam instanciam quorundam amicorum Jahudani filii Astrugi den Bonsenyor Judei Barchinone"

property should be detained or pledged, nor should he be prevented from either entering or leaving the *Juderia*¹.

About this time Jehuda was also commissioned by D. Jaime II to compile, for the young Infants Jaime and Alfonso, the collection of aphorisms in the Catalanian language. This language alone was understood by the Infants, who were then ten and twelve years old.

After Jehuda had died in the year 1331, Bonsenyor, his son, who was, like his father, a physician, and private physician to the king, received the same privileges his father had enjoyed, in recognition of the many great services Jehuda had rendered as physician both to Jaime II and to the present king. Like his father he was exempt from all taxes and burdens, and he also was allowed to have windows and doors above the wall in the house which he had inherited from the former². This is all we learn about Bonsenyor. Isaac Bonsenyor, who lived in Barcelona, and whom we suppose to have been his son, became in the year 1391 Maranne, and assumed the name of Ferrario Gracia de Gualbis³.

As already mentioned, Jehuda Bonsenyor received from the "mighty lord Jaime II the honourable charge" to collect from Arabic books sentences of "Sages and Philosophers"; to arrange and translate them "en Romans" into Spanish, or rather into Catalanian⁴. This

¹ Doc. of November 4, 1310, *Arch. de la Corona de Aragon*, Reg. 207, fol. 166 sq., in Llabrés, l. c., 127, commencing: "*Ad supplicationem fidelis fisci (phisici) nostri magistri Johannis Amely: Concedimus de gratia speciali Jahudano filio Astrugi den Bonsenyor Judei Barchinone . . .*"

² Doc. of July 5, 1331, *Arch. de la Corona de Aragon*, Reg. 483, fol. 229 sq.: "*Cum magister Bonsenyor phisicus natus Jahude Bonsenyor judei et phisici Barchinone, et familiaris nostri, quondam, qui tam in arte phisica quam in pluribus aliis multa serenissimo domino patri nostro et nobis grata servitia contulit . . .*" Doc. of April 4, 1334.

³ *Revue des Études Juives*, IV, 11.

⁴ In Jehuda's preface to the aphorisms we read: "Haja manat a mi Jahuda, Jueu de Barselona, fill d En Estruch Bonsenyor sa enrrera, que yo degues ajustar e ordonar paraules de sauis e de filosofos, e trer de libres arabichs e aquells tornar escriure en romans."

collection of aphorisms is extant in manuscript in the archives of the Aragonian crown in Barcelona, in the Escorial, in the National Library at Madrid, at Paris, and in the library of the Barons d'Escriche in Palma. It was translated into Castilian in the year 1402 by Jacob Cadique (Zadik) de Ucles under the title of *Libro de Dichos de Sabios é Philosophos*¹. It was published by D. Joseph Balari y Jovany, professor of the Greek language and literature at Barcelona, in the *Revista Catalana*², and, in the same year, by the above-mentioned D. Gabriel Llabrés y Quintana as a separate book³.

Jehuda's collection consists of sixty-seven chapters and 753 aphorisms, which he declares were drawn from Arabic books; but many, if not most, of them have grown on quite a different soil. According to D. G. Llabrés, who is of opinion that the aphorisms are patterns of pointed sayings, and that no author in any language had been able, "like Jehuda in these aphorisms," to express such great ideas in so few words, those sentences, which are particularly characterized by their pregnant brevity, must have been collected from the mouths of the people, and are still in use in Mallorca, and in Catalonia⁴. Thus: "Hiuas respondere fa errar," "Who answers quickly, errs easily" (284); "Qui mal escolta mal respon," "Who hears badly, answers badly" (294); "Qui ha riquesa ha gran noblea," "Wealth has great nobility" (471); "Qui compra so que no ha ops ven so que ha ops," "Who buys what he does not want, sells what he wants" (524); "Per molts mariners perex una nau," "By many sailors the ship is

¹ According to this, Steinschneider's statement in *Jewish Literature*, p. 103, has to be corrected: "The Libro de Dichos de Sabios e Philosophos, a compilation from the Old and New Testaments and ecclesiastical authors," also *Biblioteca española-portuguesa-judaica*, p. 110.

² January, 1889. See also JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, IV, 11.

³ Libre de paraules e dits de savis e filosofos . . . ara fets estampar complets per primera vegada ab un pròlech y documents, *Palma de Mallorca*, 1889.

⁴ Llabrés, l. c., p. xxvii.

wrecked" (618), similar to the German proverb "Many cooks spoil the porridge." It cannot be denied that many sentences allude to the time when they arose, and to the conditions of the State. The following saying is characteristic: "A Moor was asked what he would do if he were king. He answered that he would take a thousand morabatins and flee."

On inquiring after the real sources of the collection, it becomes doubtful that Jehuda culled his aphorisms directly from the works of Arabic sages and philosophers. He rather made use of Hebrew compilations from Arabic epigrammatic poets, made by Spanish Jews, such as Abraham Ibn Chisdai and Joseph Ibn Abara, both of Barcelona. He particularly borrowed from Solomon Ibn Gabirol; in fact, *a great portion of the collection has been translated word for word from Gabirol's "Mibchar ha-Peninim."* This we shall show by some examples¹:—

23. Dretura de rey es millor que larguesa de temps.

צדק המלך מועיל לעם יותר משובע הזמן (34)

48. Priuadesch de rey es axi com munt alt, on ha molts fruyts e bons, e hay males besties e serps.

חברת המלך . . . דומה להר גבוה שיש בו כל פרי טוב וכל חיות רעות. (34)

55. Trames a dir Aristotil a Alexandri: vulles esser senyor de la gent faentlos be, e hauras lur amor e hauras maior durada que si ho feyan per forsa; e sapies que no pots esser senyor de cors, e del cor sino faent be, que l poble com ha poder de dir, ha poder de fer; per so, tracta que no hagen a dir, e seras segur que no faran.

אריסטוטלס כתב אל אלכסנדרוס מוקדון • משול בעם ורדה עליהם מהטבתך להם ותנע אל אהבתם • כי מושלך בעם בהטבתך להם • טוב משתמשול בהם בהכרחתך • כי מה מועיל קנין הגופים? אך קנין הוא קנין הלבבות • כי כשתקנה הלבבות בהטבתך נוטים הגופים עמהם • ודע כי העם כשיוכלו לומר יעשו • השתדל שלא יאמרו • תנצל מאשר יעשו. (19)

¹ The figures refer to D. G. Llabrés' edition of the Jehuda Bonsenyor's collection, the figures in parentheses to the chapters in *Mibchar Hapeninim*.

54. Diu lo saui : rey e justicia son germans, no pot durar la i. menys del altre.

אמר (החכם) המלך והתורה שני אחים לא יעמוד אחד מבלתי השני. (34)

In the סוד הסודות, attributed to Aristotle, and extant in manuscript in Paris and Oxford, it says : ונמצא בקצת אבנים חקוק בלשון יון : המלך והצדק אחים אי אפשר האחד בלתי האחר.

89. Bon nodriment es ensenyament a que no fassas res en celat que n hages vergonya es si sabut.

מהו הצניעות ? שלא תעשה בסתר מה שתחביי ממנו בגלוי. (31)

90. El mestre de poquea es axi com qui fa escriptura cauada en pedra, e aquell de granea (granesa) axi com qui escriu en aygua¹.

בקשת החכמה בימי הזקנה כתיב על החול יובקשת החכמה בימי הנערות כפתוח על האבן. (1)

92. Els sauis son en terra axi com les esteles al cel.

דומים החכמים בארץ למאורות בשמים. (1)

93. Els reys son senyors de la gent, e los sauis senyors dels reys.

המלכים שופטי הארץ והחכמים שופטי המלכים (1)

111. No t placia que t honre la gent per hauer ni per senyoria, que si ho perts perdras lo honrament, mas vulles que t honren per saber e per bon nodriment.

אם בני אדם יכבדוך לעושר או לשררה • אל יערב לך • כי הכבוד ההוא יפנה בפנותם • אבל יערב לך אם יכבדוך בשביל החכמה או . . . בעבור מוסר. (1)

102. Qui s ergulex per son saber aclinel Deu per sa obra.

כל מי שרבו פניו תמעיט חכמתו (1)

108. Axi es lo saber qui no profita com tressaur qui no s despen.

כל חכמה שלא דובר בה כמטמון יאין מוציאין ממנו. (1)

¹ Instead of aygua (water) the MS. read, perhaps, arena (sand) : Jehuda altered the sentence, preferring youth to old age.

122. Ben demanar es mig saber.

שאלת חכם חצי תשובה

129. Dix i fill de rey a un saui, fort som ansios de tu ; dix lo saui, per que ? dixli, per so que veig de ta gran pobresa : dix lo saui, si tu sabies que s pobresa, series affaenat de esser ancios de tu matex.

אמר אדם אחד לחכם כמה רישך גדול . אמר לו אלו היית יודע מהו הרש היית טורדת אותך החמלה על נפשך (מהתמלך עלי). (44)

142, 43¹. Demanaren a un saui, quals son millors los sauis o els richs, e ell dix, que ls sauis. Item, dixerenti, perque van los sauis a les cazes dels richs, mes que ls richs a les cazes dels sauis ; dix, per so com los sauis entenen e conexen la valor de la riquea, e els richs no conexen ne entenen la valor del saber.

שאלו לחכם מי הם יותר גדולים החכמים או העשירים ? אמר החכמים . אמרו לו אם כן מפני מה החכמים בפתחי העשירים יותר מהעשירים בפתחי החכמים ? אמר מפני שהחכמים מכירים מעלת העושר והעשירים אינם מכירים מעלת החכמה. (1)

149. Dix lo saui : mostre ton saber a qui es nesci, e apren de cell qui sab, e tu si fas asso, apendras (aprendas) so que no sabs, e membrarte e decorreras so que sabs.

אמר החכם למד חכמה למי שאינו יודע ולמוד ממי שיודע . וכאשר תעשה זה תדע מה שלא ידעת ותזכור את אשר ידעת. (1)

162. Amich ver d'hom es son seny, e son enamich oradura.

אוהב האדם שכלו ושונאו כסילותו. (54)

{ 169. Qui no ha seny no es senyor de su ira.
{ 456. Qui no es senyor de sa ira no es senyor de son bon nodriment².

מי שאינו מושל בבעסו אין שכלו שלם. (3)

289. Mes val callar que foll parlar.

השתיקה של אדם טובה מן הדבור בלא עתו. (32)

¹ Both these numbers form one aphorism and must not be separated.

² A similar sentence in מוסרי השליסופים (I, 5) : מי שלא יכבוש שכלו לא יכבוש (I, 5) : מי שלא יכבוש שכלו לא יכבוש.

297. Cor d hom assanat es castell de secret.

סודך אסירך. (29)

299. Dix lo saui: so que tens celat de ton enamich no ha descobres a ton amich, per so com los cors se muden.

אמר החכם כל דבר שתסתיר אותו משנאך אל תגלהו לאוהבך. (29)

300. Cor de bon hom es fossa de secret.

האיך הסתרת הסוד? שמתי לבי קברו. (29)

321. Prometre de franch es donar, e donar de cobeu es prometre.

נדר הנדיב מתנה מהרה ונדר הכילי האחור והעלילה. (30)

333. Franch es qui esta apparellat de donar del çeu e que t lunys de l altruy.

איזהו נדיב? מי שהתנדב בעולמו לחקן אחריתו. (44)

359. Qui es auar de son argent de fer be a pobres, trametli Deu yra de senyor.

מי שקפץ ידו מהדלים ישרים האלהים המלכים בממונו. (43)

391. Demanaren a Aristotil que es amich, dix: un cor en dos cossos.

שאלו לחכם מהו האהבה? אמר נמות הלבבות וחתהברם יחד. (25)

395. Si trobes ton amich comensel a saludar e feli loch e sonal (cridel) per lo millor nom que ell ha.

שלשה ישימו לך אהבת אהבך זכה שתתחילו בשלום כשתפגשו ותרחיב לו מושב ותקראהו בחביב מן הכנויים. (20)

396. Los amichs son de iii maneres: axi com a vianda que no pot hom estar menys d ella, e axi com medicina que la ha hom ops (nul temps), e axi com la malaltia que no la ha ops nul temps.

החברים שלש כתות: מהם כמזון שלא תוכל לעמוד מבלעדיו ומהם כרפואה אשר אתה צריך לעתים ומהם כמדרה אשר אין אתה צריך לעולם. (20)

402. Qui pren tota la gent en un grau, no ha amich.

מי שבני אדם שוים אצלו. . . . (56)

405. Diu el saui: cell hom que poch he amat tots temps, es ceyl qui m diu mos vicis enfre mi e ell.

אמר (החכם) אני אוהב מי שיודיעני במומי בני וביני בלבד. (24)

408. Diu el saui: si vols conexer l hom, demana qui ha priuat.

אמר החכם כשתשאל על האדם שאל מי רעהו. (42)

413. Diu Plato: qui s vol venjar de son enamich, deu tractar de crexer sa valor.

שאלו לחכם במה יתנקם אדם משונאו? אמר שיוסיף מעלה יתרה בעצמו. (53)

464. Si vols esser segur que hages so que desiges, desige so que pots hauer.

בקש מה שאתה צריך לו ועזוב מה שאין אתה צריך לו כי בעזיבת מה שאין אתה צריך לו תשיג מה שאתה צריך לו. (44)

472. Dix un saui: yo som pus rich que negun rey. Demanaren al saui perque ho deya, dix: yo he poch e bastem, e ell ha molt e no li basta, e ell ha ansia de molts e yo no de negun.

אני עשיר ממך (מהמלך) אמר לו המלך: ואיך אתה עשיר ממני? אמר לו מפני שאני מסתפק במעט שבידי יותר ממה שאתה מסתפק ברוב שלך. (10)

481. Riquesa de cor val mes que riquesa d hauer.

עושר הנפש טוב מעושר הממון. (10)

545. Oradura es malaltia que no ha medicina.

השוטה אין לו רפואה והוא מודה שאין לו תקנה. (42)

These examples sufficiently show that Jehuda Bonsenyor has made ample use of Solomon Ibn Gabirol's collection, besides the collections of others, like the one of Abraham Ibn Chasdai. The sentence 449: "Tota re comensa poch e puys crex, leuat dol qui comensa gran e puys minua" is to be found in so many words in *Prince and Dervise*, p. 83: כל דבר נולד קטן וילך הלך וגדול וזלתי היגן שנולד גדול וילך: הלך וחדול.

That he has also made use of sentences from the Talmud I will for the present only allude to. "Tot so que Deus fa, es bo" (18), is the same as Berachot, 60 b : כל דעביר רהמנא : למב עביר.

"Qui tot ho vol tot ho pert," or "Qui mucho quere, puerde toto" corresponds with the Talmudic sentence : תפשת מרובה : לא תפשת ; and so "Que basta de lum a un, basta a molts" is the Talmudic sentence, Sabbath, 122 a : נר לאחד נר למאה :

But to this, as also to his proverbs of Solomon, I shall refer on another occasion.

M. KAYSERLING.